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## Chaos/ Sick of the SICI and On to EDI

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# Chaos

By Sandra K. Paul, President (SKP Associates)

## Are You Sick Of The SICI Yet? And What About Implementing EDI?

Two areas of concern have come to the fore lately in the Book and Serials Industry System Advisory Committees (BISAC and SISAC). I'll look at both of them, in an attempt to stimulate some of you, frustrate others, and hope for some input on both.

### ARE YOU SICK OF THE SICI YET?

In a recent column I pointed out some of the problems that have been created by confusing the ANSI/NISO Serial Item and Contribution Identifier (SICI) Standard with the machine-readable encodation of the item level section of that standard. The latter is known as the SISAC Bar Code Symbol. Now more confusion has arisen about SICI, particularly as they are created in anticipation of publication from publication patterns created by automated systems.

For instance, journal *ABC* is a semi-monthly publication. The last issue received was March 1, 1993, Volume 10, Number 3. If a library automation system were to predict the next issue expected, it would identify it as March 16, 1993, Volume 10 (unless the volume year usually changes at that point in the year, in which case that would be 11), Number 4 (or number 1, if . . . you get the picture). In fact, SISAC has invested a large number of hours developing a series of electronic data interchange (EDI) formats that provide for claims to be made for missing issues. Such systems would, logically, create the SICI based on this type of publication pattern prognosis.

BUT, the ANSI/NISO SICI is based on a serial being *published* in some form — print on paper or electronically are both accommodated. So, we really don't know what the SICI of the next issue of *ABC* will be until it is published. Let's say that the publisher decides for reasons only known to him/herself that

the next issue will carry a cover date of March 30 — after all it is being published twice a month! You see the problem with claiming using a SICI showing the *ABC* ISSN, a date of March 16, 1993, Volume 10, Number 4. And you can start to see the world of library automation suddenly filled with Quasi-SICIs and Might-Have-Been SICIs. The same argument holds for very rational publishers who would like to alert libraries to articles they plan to publish in the future and allow for the purchase of pre-prints. Until the specific item in which that contribution will appear is known, the publisher cannot assign a REAL SICI to it.

So, we now have a new problem that, I hope, will find a realistic solution. We all know that the SICI is the most appropriate identifier for published information, insofar as it can be created from the bibliographic reference to the article. It was carefully crafted and we don't want to lose its many benefits. Therefore, the answer seems to be to create a PCI — a Pre-publication Contribution Identifier. If this identifier incorporates the ISSN, as the SICI does, and if it follows easy-to-understand rules, as the SICI does, and is easy to create, as the SICI is, then it's bound to work. SISAC has just begun looking at various alternatives for such an identifier and welcomes the input of all *Against the Grain* readers.

### WHAT ABOUT IMPLEMENTING EDI?

BISAC has a unique problem when it comes to moving to what we all think of as EDI — ANSI X12 transaction sets. Its ten year history of workable EDI formats that called primarily for communication-by-sending-tapes-of-80-column-card-layouts-through-the-mails may not have been sophisticated, but it worked. In fact, the electronic transmission of these same formats, either through direct dial or the Association of American Publishers' PUBNET service, is also working so well for so



many of the publishers and their major customers, the incentive to move to ANSI X12 is hard to find. This is compounded by several Value Added Networks (VANS) which are offering not only store-and-forward capability, but the ability to take in the old BISAC formats, convert them to X12 for transmission and then re-format them at the other end. The problem is that at least two of these organizations have DIFFERENT interpretations of what should come in or out of their systems!

Organizations in both BISAC and SISAC put up a minor smoke screen when it was announced that X12 will be moving to EDIFACT in 1997; they said I'll just wait till then. Since X12 formats migrate to new versions every year, the concept of waiting to get started until then is like saying I won't buy a computer now — I won't learn or benefit from the technology — because there will be better ones in the future. The formats in use TODAY require the basic data elements for any business transaction. Those data elements won't change over time, so we might as well start using them right now.

Which brings us to another common problem for both BISAC and SISAC — how do we get LIBRARIES to implement EDI? The base of experience tells us that more libraries have bought automated systems than developed their own. Therefore, we think that if we can convince the Integrated Library Systems (ILS) vendors to modify their systems to incorporate EDI, the libraries that use those systems will rush to implement this time and error saving technique. However, most ILS vendors have not been provided with information about the alternatives open to them. Do they have to actually create an EDI transmission and the ability to accept an EDI response within their library

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## Acquiring Minds

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the end of this column is a bibliography of sources which may help illuminate the problem of the paradigm.

Read a few and then ask these questions of yourself:

- ... Can we reconcile Kuhn's vision

## Chaos

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system? Do they have to build interfaces to the various VANs with their mixed bag of requests? OR, can they simply provide the basic business data elements that work with any one of the many off-the-shelf translation software packages libraries can buy?

Realizing that the ILS vendors, book wholesalers and serials subscription agents are the key to implementing EDI — BISAC and SISAC are holding a hands-on, invitation-only workshop for those folks at 2:30 p.m. on Friday, June 25th in New Orleans. Invitations are going out to those on our lists; if you are in one of these categories and don't receive one, please call me at 212-929-1393. We hope that this frank discussion of alternatives will provide a better understanding of the possibilities and expedite the implementation of EDI in the library community as a whole.

## CONCLUSION

In the ever-chaotic world of standards, I hope that this article provided you with some insights into the problems so that you may help find the solutions. If you have ideas or suggestions stimulated by the Chaos described here, and want to air your concerns publicly, send a letter to Katina. Or, you can call me at 212-675-7804 or fax me at 212-989-7542. If you want to participate in a listserv devoted to the Quasi-SICI and other implications of publication patterns, contact Joyce McDonough, Chair of SISAC's Great Expectations Subcommittee at Internet — jm86@cunifx.cc.columbia.edu. Bitnet — jm86@cunifx. Voice (if you have a problem getting through) — 212-854-4764. As always, it won't work without your participation! Thanks.☺

with the practice of librarianship?

- ... What if we conceded that librarianship, as a social science, an applied field and service profession, could have a paradigm?
- ... What might the paradigm look like and how would it operate?
- ... Are changes in librarianship truly paradigmatic, or changes along a continuum?

The Kuhnian concept is so compelling that it begs to be read in the original works and this condensation does not do it justice. I urge you to read his works and then decide yourself. You may choose to reject Kuhn's definition of a paradigm and apply the paradigm concept to explain general changes and philosophies in librarianship. But ask yourself whether by rejecting Kuhn's concept we have gained or lost something in the process and whether

## On The Road

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up and people are waiting for you to arrive."

Maybe I gulped. Maybe I sweated. Maybe my voice went up an octave. I don't remember. What I do remember is that then and there I had a problem. I had to go to the meeting as scheduled and I had no shoes. Talk about caught between a bare foot and a library.

So what happened? What did I do?

The final result was (to my best guess) the first ever extensive Approval Plan Profile review done by a salesperson wearing a blue pin-stripe suit, white button-down shirt, burgundy tie, blue sox, and — flip/flops. True story. No kidding. You heard it here.

There are hundreds (nay thousands; what? millions) of stories to be shared by the readers of *Against the Grain*. If I don't receive any I'll have to either continue telling tales on myself or resort to sharing something else. Readers, you really don't want that to happen. Write me . . . . ☺

our power of explanation has been magnified or diminished.

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## Book Pricing Update

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press title. A true bargain, though, must be wanted or needed, and at most academic libraries, these books are neither.

If titles don't sell, publishers cannot afford to produce them. In the February 24, 1993, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Harald Bakken and Mischa Richter have a cartoon depicting the rejection of a manuscript. Says the publisher to the hapless author, "Basically, we feel that it's too popular a treatment for the university presses and too scholarly a treatment for the mainstream presses. Our suggestion is that you add a little sex and violence and try Hollywood." Failing that, university presses may swing back toward the traditional scholarly monograph, for the traditional scholarly market.☺